

MY FIRST DUTY ABOARD SHIP, THE U.S.S. RELIEF.

The Relief has been called a fair weather ship, so I can tell you nothing of storms and ship-wreck, but much of warm weather and sunshine. One day in September, 1922, while on night duty at Chelsea, Mass., I was awakened by one of the nurses who said, "Wake up, your orders for the Relief are here, and I couldn't let you sleep another minute". Rubbing sleepy eyes, I said "No?" for at the time when transfers were expected at a station, many jokes were played and false alarms given. However, this report was soon confirmed and then came the usual scramble to pack and get away. I took the Fall River boat; it was a wonderful moonlight night, which I had to enjoy alone. Arriving in New York, I was told The Relief was anchored off 96th St., and making good time. I arrived very promptly, only to be told that The Relief boats did not come in there but down at 86th St. 86th St. wasn't far, so to 86th St., I went and was told The Relief boats came in at 82nd St. At 82nd, I was told to go to 79th and from there to 72nd. At 72nd, to my surprise, I was told that a boat was due very soon.

As a motor sailor from The Relief came along side the dock and the Patrol Officer called out "Relief! Relief!" I began to feel the thrill of belonging--"That's my boat, that means me!" As we approached the ship, I saw white things waving in the air, and in great surprise, I said to myself, "Now isn't that lovely of the nurses on board to so cordially bid me welcome." As I came nearer I could hear the band playing, and the many white things waving a cordial welcome to me turned into white trouser legs rising and falling to music in the setting up exercises of quarters, and as

I came timidly up the gangway, off they ran as fast as they could go in "double time". 'Twas a thrilling introduction to the ship and I was taken immediately to the Nurses' Ward Room where I at once fell into the chimes; this called forth one of the nurses who extended the right hand of fellowship, and I was there, on board The Relief, water and ships on all sides of me, and I was a member of Uncle Sam's Navy afloat.

I must tell you some of the things I had to get used to. I must never say up-stairs or down-stairs, but top-side and down below, and up the ladder and down the ladder; I must remember always to step up- that I forgot many times, my poor shins still bear witness, for at every doorway and at the top of every ladder is a portion of the bulkhead over which one must step or bear the consequences. We must get used to bells telling the time every half hour, whistles blowing, guns booming at unexpected moments, winches screeching in the wee small hours of the morning, water swishing on the decks, and all sorts of thumping and banging overhead, and blowers and electric fans whirring at all times. Does that sound as if one could ever sleep? Will you believe me when I say that sometimes I'll hear scarcely a bell all day, that I can sleep through the preparations for getting under way, and that even a gun booming will scarcely awaken me?

It was on a Thursday I came aboard and on the following Monday we weighed anchor and set sail for Yorktown, Va. My qualms of seasickness were not many or serious and at Lynhaven Roads where we stood by, while the battle-wagons did their maneuvers and gunnery practice farther out, I became fairly well accustomed to the constant motion. At Yorktown, where we spent our week-ends, the water was perfectly smooth and if we could not have seen it, we would never have known we were on the sea.

For one month here I was on the ship, leaving it once, when in "Abandon Ship Drill" we took to the boats. That was another thing to which we had to become accustomed; on certain days the siren would suddenly shriek, and the word "Fire Drill" be passed. Some corpsmen would quickly close doors and ports, others get blankets and other designated articles, some stand by to carry out patients. Doctors would muster their boats' crews and attend to preparations for removal of patients, each having his special part to do in the preparations for leaving the ship. The different shrieks of the siren meant, first, fire or collision, then at last Abandon Ship. To me, no matter what happened, it was always a part of the drill, so one day when two sailors capsized a boat, the "Man overboard" rang out and shortly after, the sailors came dripping up the gangway. I thought it was all a part of the game and very well done, and was much surprised when told later that a line had broken, throwing the sailors into the water; as they could swim very little, they were really frightened and glad enough to be rescued.

After the month's stay at Lynhaven Roads and Yorktown, we returned to New York, and didn't New York look good to us! We could hardly wait to get the first possible boat ashore; and walk; I walked between eight and ten miles that first afternoon by actual count. Neither trolleys, busses, taxis, subways or elevated held any charms for me while I could tramp, tramp, tramp on terra firma. Next in our rounds of pleasures ashore were the pleasant visits at the quarters in Brooklyn. Most of us had ship-mates there, but if not, we were made just as welcome and as much a part of the family. The shops and theaters took their toll of our time and shekles

and after a week or ten days of the city's gaieties, we were happy to weigh anchor and set sail again to Lynhaven and Yorktown for the regular program.

This time to my great pleasure, I found I had a friend living a few miles out from Gloucester Point, and spent a wonderful week-end with her. Among other interesting things, I was told that the soil in that section of Virginia was all alluvial soil, and bones and shells I saw that had been buried beneath several layers of soil for hundreds of years.

Our return port after this trip was Philadelphia and how well I remember that morning coming up the Delaware, the deserted ship yards, the discarded ships, the giant floating crane, the largest in the world, and in the distance watching closely over all, the benign William Penn. At League Island, as at Brooklyn, we were made welcome to the quarters, their bed, board and baths, and we were as happily entertained on board ship as the nurses from there.

An orgy of shopping always follows one of these trips, and at this time, as it was leave time for the Christmas holidays, we shopped continuously as long as the money lasted, saving only enough for the home trip and return. Then came Christmas "athome" and it being my first real going-to-sea experience, the home folks were regaled at all times with tales of what happened here and there, how much I was laughed at for not knowing star-board from port, fore from aft, abeam from abaft, a boat from a ship, a chief with gold chevrons from a captain with gold stripes, and softly, let us say, the times I looked a little pale, was a little sea-sick. After the holidays, we came straggling back in twos and threes; the morning

I came back the fog was so thick that the cars scarcely moved, and after arriving at the navy yard, I nearly lost myself and was almost over-leave.

When we weighed anchor on January third, it was for sunny Cuba we set sail. As I have not yet told you how wonderful I thought my stateroom, en route to Cuba, I will do so. Of course at first it looked small for two people, but at the same time it was a marvel to me the number of things we could each store away in the space provided. On the wall is a book shelf containing two deep shelves about three feet long; next to that an electric fan which always runs at night, and often during the day, as we never suffer from the cold but sometimes feel the heat. Then comes a double wall cabinet with a mirror in each door; shelves beneath and inside ample room for all our reserve supply of toilet articles. What those apparently small cupboards will hold is always surprising. At each side of this cabinet is a good sized port, or windows perhaps, as they are square, not round. Our wash stand with its duplicate of everything is all one can desire for its purpose, and our combination desk and chiffonier and a real safe with a combination is just the climax, which one must see to appreciate.

Then last, but not least come our bunks, one over the other with drawers for shoes underneath. Being the last comer, the upper is mine; as no ladder is provided, one must do the next best thing and stand on a chair or the lower bunk and climb or spring, being careful not to spring too high and bump your head and not to fall short of your mark, lest you lose your balance and tumble backward. At first, all this seemed rather difficult,

but now rather fun, and once there you don't have to answer the telephone, start the fan, or put out the lights. The one thing I haven't accomplished yet is always to remember "Low Bridge" when sitting up suddenly in that top bunk.

The most wonderful thing on our trip to Cuba was the blue, blue water. Think of the very bluest thing you know and it is bluer than that, a deep, live blue. The journey was a smooth one, everyone feeling fine; scarcely a ship was seen on the way and the first land I remember was, or would have been by day, San Salvador. All we saw was the light, but the next morning we saw an outlying group of the Bermudas. Then on January eighth, toward evening, the mountains of Cuba rose through the haze and many glistening flying fish, almost like humming birds, or skipping stones, delighted us.

During the night, we came in around Cape Macey and between eight and nine A.M. our ship swung about to enter Guantanamo Bay. Cuba looked like a procession of mountains and hills, beautiful in the distance with their outlines softened by the haze. On nearer approach, they looked very bare, with here and there a few scattered palm trees, many places entirely without vegetation, in others low lying shrubs and many cacti. As we rounded Guantanamo Light, we were in a horse-shoe shaped cove with Cuba on three sides of us. The water became a beautiful clear green instead of the dark blue of the deep sea. The Prometheus, the Proteus and the poor old Iowa were the only ships in before us. On the port side as we entered were the Marine Quarters, the men on the hill and below on Fisher-

man's Point, the bungalows of the Officers. I was fortunate in being detailed on Ward A, in contagion, which is aft and above decks, so could look after my patients and yet see all that was going on. We could not really settle down to business until we were safely in and securely tied up to the buoy. 'Twas a wonderful day and soon turned out to be a work-a-day, as patients began coming in. Pneumonias were my specialty at that time and you know they keep one busy, so, if up to this time I have given you the impression that there was no work for us on the ship, you must change it at once, for we have always been fairly busy; and in Cuba, very very busy.

On January 11th, the ships began to come in; the Wyoming, the North Dakota, and the Utah coming first, and oh, how grand they looked to me, steaming in with everyone at attention and guns saluting. Several destroyers and sub-marines followed and again I felt that wonderful thrill at being a real sea-going member of the U.S.N. Inspection comes on board ship as elsewhere and the same scrubbing and shining goes on in preparation, and the same, only more so, dignified and impressive procession takes place and the same sigh of relief follows.

Our main recreation in Cuba was hiking and swimming, with a trip or two to Gaimanera and Guantanamo City. One picnic, we had out beyond the light-house at Cable Beach. There I saw my first Portugese Man-of-War, rather limp and sodden, high and dry on the beach, but still brightly colored and able to float when thrown back into the water. A few tiny

shells and fairly pretty bits of white coral we collected as souvenirs, had a delicious supper, sang songs after the usual fashion of picnics, and came home by the light of the moon.

The swimming was my greatest delight and I never did get enough of it. I had just learned to dive before I came to the Relief, so I felt quite proud of myself, but my pride was of short duration, for following my usual procedure, I walked to the end of the springboard, slowly and carefully bent double, that is tipped over as far as possible and dropped; I held stiff so didn't flop, and the dive was, though slow and lifeless, clean cut enough but I always went nearly to the bottom and thought I never would come up again, so rose puffing and blowing and more or less "pop-eyed". Once or twice I was allowed to do this with proud satisfaction, then Cap't ----- thought that he had had patience long enough and said, "What's the idea of posing so long? Let her go!" In I went once more, and no more waiting after that. Miss ----- could dive easily and gracefully and, apparently without fear, while I had to make myself go, happy though I was after I had done it. One day she said "Let us dive off the piles". "Have you done it?" said I. "Yes" said she. "All right", said I. Though the piles looked to me as tall as the masts. Up went Miss ----- and down like a mermaid and up went I, but, oh, the awful feeling standing alone, high in the air, my ship mates looking on, and craven fear turning my back. Cap't ----- shouted "All those women on the shore will laugh at you if you don't go off" and so, off I went, miles it seemed to me, twenty feet I was sure it was, and then my fear over and my pride very great, I asked how high the pile was and was told it was eight feet. I never did believe it and was

sorry I had asked.

My first trip to Guantanamo City was an entirely new experience. First, by tug to queer old Caimanara, which I can't describe except as a funny little temporary touring place with Brooklyn contiguity and joined to it by Brooklyn Bridge; I wish I had a picture of this Brooklyn and its bridge to show you. There were funny little Spanish shops with three sides closed, the fourth open to the public and in most of which bottle goods were freely displayed.

Silks, embroideries, laces, perfumes, etc. were held before your eyes to tempt you; some salesmen speaking English quite well, others only Spanish, so bartering was not always easy. The water supply was brought in a barrel drawn by a small horse, or in tin cans in a little cart drawn by a goat.

The train from Caimanera to Guantanamo City ran once a day and did not come back. The country we passed through was in many places covered only with cacti. In some places, there were salt beds and we saw a few sugar plantations. The small children wore nature's own raiment and nothing else. Arrived in Guantanamo, there were four of us, we crowded into a "sea-going hack", some times in better days called a Royal Victoria, and made for the Hotel Washington, which was very Spanish with its high grill work and enclosed court with fountain. We were hungry, but had to guess at what we could eat until an English speaking waiter could be found. Of course, no one dared drink water, and beer or wine not being my accustomed beverage, I felt I must needs go slow. However, my thirst was assuaged with no ill effects, and off we went to the shops. There were some very good ones,

and at one especially, La Perla, where we received such courteous and able attention that laces and silks and organdies were bought to the extent of our purses.

Having finished our shopping, or at least, spent all our money, we had some time to spare and decided to drive around town until train time. We had ample time to see everything, but our driver knowing no English took our "Drive around" absolutely literally and drove us around and around one square, part of the time on two wheels; the children and chickens scampering in all directions and "Stop! Go this way" meant nothing but "round and round". We got a flying glimpse of the cemetery, a few native huts on the outskirts, a passing glimpse of Spanish Ladies at home, when the wind blew the draperies aside, but not even to get a snap-shot could we stop that mad "round and round". At last, in despair, someone remembered the Spanish for railway station so off we flew and, thanks be, arrived with no broken bones.

It seemed there as if everyone was smoking cigars, even the women had long black ones in their mouths. As I said before, the train from Caimanera left there one day and didn't go back until the following day, so that night we returned by way of Boqueron, where (while waiting for our boat) we were entertained by a Cuban Customs' Inspector and his family. For fear you may think we were unescorted, I must tell you that Chaplain ----- was our official guide and mentor, but during the shopping tour, he had discreetly left us to our own devices, but looked after our safety on the journey home. To go back to our inspector, he insisted on our coming into his home which was near the dock, introduced us to his little wife, an eighteen year old girl from Jamaica, and his three cunning children. Wine, we must have and did have; a sweet mild wine, a whole bottle of which was consumed for

our refreshment and when, our boat arriving on time, we bade them good-by and thanked them for their hospitality, the man smiling and bowing low said, "We have been honored in entertaining the daughters of Uncle Sam."

Never in my life before have I spent an entire winter away from snow and cold weather. To have continuous sunshine and clear skies, was wonderful. I felt all the time my letters should be dated July and August instead of January and February. On February 12th, we left Cuba and started for Panama, but that is a tale by itself.

Coming through the Panama Canal was one of the perfect things that happen once in a life time. As we entered that morning at a little after six o'clock, on the left, coming out from the underbrush with great long knives in their hands, were six or eight fierce looking men with swarthy skins and long black moustaches. They looked like brigands, but were, doubtless, natives on their way to cut sugar-cane. On the right, almost hidden by greenery at the water's edge, was a native dug-out, a little boat made from one long log, with the middle scooped out. Every patient that could walk or be carried up above was taken on deck, and the nurses in turn made periodic visits to the few ill ones left below. We spent every possible moment on deck, running from one side to the other for fear we might miss something. The beauty and wonder of it all is past description, and going through in our own great ship with a couple of sub-marines trailing behind, as though they were stealing a ride, added just that much to the thrill.

The perfume of the flowers, the songs of the birds, the marvelous beauty

of the vari-colored mountain-tops rolling away in the distance with the soft beautiful green at their feet! I can just close my eyes and see it all again. Isn't it grand to carry a picture like that with you always, and that is one that cannot be broken?

Lake Gatun, which is a great valley flooded to the tops of its trees, is beautiful, and almost beyond belief; but the mechanism of the locks beyond my comprehension. My entire trip had been more or less of a dream, but the trip through the canal was a dream within a dream.

Arriving at Balboa, we steamed beyond and anchored well out. We worked hard in Panama, so were very tired to make frequent trips ashore. But we made the most of the trips when we did make them. At old Panama, I was much surprised to find so little in the way of old structures, but the old bridge, a tower, and the walls and arches of an old monastery and convent were interesting indeed. One could well believe they were the 300 years old, that was claimed for them.

Panama of today is to me very interesting and entertaining, for never before have I been in a city, except old Guantamamo, where the shops were mostly owned by Chinese, Spanish, or French. It is all so different from Boston and New York. I liked to poke about, even though I bought little; because there is so much one wouldn't care to buy. Many things are there to tempt one just by their beauty or queerness.

Neither in Panama or Cuba did we suffer from an excessive heat, except when shut up in the operating-room or some close place, for the blowers and fans were going constantly and the nights were cool and comfortable.

At one time during our stay in Cuba, both the Mercy and the Relief were so busy and crowded that a detention camp had to be opened on shore.

On March 22nd, many hearts were really saddened and many an old salty tear actually dimmed the eyes as the old Iowa, controlled entirely by radio was finally sent to her ocean bed. On March 24th, there was the greatest display of search lights that I ever expect to see. Flashing out from the various ships and fortifications, crossing and recrossing each other in great sprays and tendrils of light, quivering and flickering all over the sky, like a marvelous display of Northern Lights.

The trip up the west coast was smooth and uneventful with land in sight most of the way; it seemed like mountains reaching to the very water's edge. A school of porpoise and, now and then, a flock of flying fish delighted us. I was on night duty part of the way, and the stars were so brilliant and beautiful every night. About five o'clock one morning, I thought an aeroplane or ship was bearing down upon us, as such a bright light was heading our way. After proclaiming the fact and gathering an audience, I discovered the big bright light as Venus.

We arrived in San Diego about six in the morning, transferred our patients to the hospital, and ourselves made a flying trip through the town to the hospital. At six in the evening, we left San Diego for San Pedro where we remained about six weeks, keeping very busy most of the time. The weather was cool for the most part, and after the tropics, California did not seem so "sunny". From San Pedro we took a week-end trip to Mt. Lowe, passing through beautiful Pasadena with its orange groves full of fruit and heavy with the perfume of the flowers.

The trip up from San Pedro to San Francisco was another peaceful

one. From there, one week-end, we went to San Mateo, and visited the Mills' Memorial Hospital, a beautiful, finely equipped private hospital built by Mrs. Whitelaw Reid in memory of her father and mother. Except for its wards and operating room, it is like some very attractive private home without the least institutional air about it. Three sides look out into a beautiful rose garden, in the center of which is "The Little Duck Baby" as a fountain. Close by is a charming memorial chapel, and a rustic bridge across a deep ravine leads to the nurses' quarters. We drove through the fruitful orchards and rich valleys of San Mateo and adjoining counties, where great estates of all types in all directions were seen. We finished with a trip through Palo Alto and Leeland Stanford University buildings and grounds. The chapel with its marvelous mosaics, glorious memorial windows, chancel and altar of white marble, and its fine organ, all worth a long day's journey to see. One Sunday we drove out to Santa Rosa, and saw the homelike residence of Luther Burbank, his person at the gate, and across the street his experimental gardens.

From Mare Island, five of us took a motor trip via Sacramento and Truckee to Tahoe Lake. We drove one hundred and sixty-five miles the first day, arriving at Tahoe Inn at 7 P.M. The next morning after an early breakfast, we were on the road again, driving along the shore of the beautiful lake, stopping at its southern end to look back over Tahoe with its chasing shadows, and high green shores. At our feet lay Emerald Bay, a gem of exquisite beauty. This day we spent climbing and descending mountains, beside noisy rushing brooks, with camps everywhere; some evidently being just established. Some had the homelike arrangement of continued occupation while others were being broken up. Some of the camps had very little equipment, and others many comforts of home.

Herds of cattle fed in the fertile valleys and even on the mountain tops, and in one great valley between high peaks, we came upon a great flock of sheep, which did not fail to have its black member. The shepherd dogs were there with all their canny wisdom, and to my great surprise and delight, the shepherd carried a real "Bopeep" shepherd's crook. As we came down into the valley near woodfords, the road became dry and sandy and the sun hot. A refreshing thunder storm overtook us however, and the rainbow following was only one more good omen and thing of beauty.

The short part of the journey through Nevada was mostly through sage brush and alkali dust, but as this had been followed by our drenching rain, we soon forgot it and enjoyed fully the drive up another rough mountainside, then through the valley toward Bridgeport. A coyote dashing away from a brook side and a real mountain pack train with burros, dogs, and men on horseback, added to the unusual sights for us. A steaming brook from the hot springs was one more interesting item, and always we could look up and see snow on the mountains. At Bridgeport, we were examined for out-of-state fruit and for the alfalfa weevil, supposed to inhabit Nevada; but we were guiltless of having any such stowaways. Then on again up the mountain side, up and up the elevation of Bodie, something over 8000 feet, but we did not go to the top. Then gradually, down, until suddenly coming round a turn to the clear open side of the mountain.

Mona Lake lay before us, the volcanic mountains with their crater peaks all about her, with two more for good measure raising her center, while the setting sun cast a soft rosy glow over all. All the way down the mountain this beautiful, almost ocean-like thing lay before us and along its side we rode until we reached Tioga Lodge where we had dinner and

spent the night. We could not wait for full sunrise the next morning as we had ninety-eight or a hundred miles to go that day, so we were on our way at 4:45 A.M. This time we had real mountain climbing to do, no tree or shrub to break our fall, if our driver or his good car full fail us. Up, up, over and over, we crawled; sheer massive stone walls above and around us. Lake after lake, we passed as we gained high valleys where snow still lingered and light snows had recently fallen. At 7 A.M., we were at the gate to Yosemite, 9941 feet above the sea, where we had our breakfast.

Then on again, still on the mountain tops, yet through many fertile meadows, and by steady and hard driving we slipped into line for the one o'clock control, just as the whistle blew for the procession to start. What a sigh of thankfulness went up, that we had not missed it, for this last four miles of the trail is so hard, narrow, and dangerous, that travellers may go in one direction only; entering from the up side on the odd hours and from the valley side on the even.

Shortly before two o'clock, we were in the beautiful Yosemite Valley. Great mountains on all sides; Capitan accepting our pass word at the foot of the Big Oak Flat Road; Pohena Falls waving us a welcome on the right, and Yosemite Falls, with her gentle summer voice bidding us in on the left. After lunch and a little rest, we filled our gas tank and drove to Camp Curry and around the floor of the valley, gazing up at all the great familiar guardians. El Capitan, monarch of all he surveys, Gloria Point, the outlook to all things beautiful; Bridal Veil and Yosemite in dainty summer beauty and Cathedral Rock with the spires that almost touch heaven.

At four P.M., we started up the steep and rough pass to Wowoma and the Mariposa Juni, and in two hours we were 6000 feet above the sea; and in the midst of the giants of the forest, we spent the night. The road down from the grove was dusty and bad. The sun blazed down, even the wind was hot. No tree, no telegraph pole; not a tiny bush to cast a shade, just the little "two by four" fence posts here and there. In the scant shade of these were a few birds, and in one place a squirrel. As we came into the great fertile valley of San Joaquin, orchards of peach, fig, prune, and olives, and great vineyards of grape stretched farther than the eye could reach; while melons of all sizes, colors and varieties grew among or between them. But of all this, the great green fields of alfalfa were the most attractive, for in the dry season, this is the only thing that spreads a green carpet.

We reached Mare Island that evening and literally came back to earth. Our four past days had taken us so far above the earth and shown us such wonderful moving pictures, we feel sure they will remain in our memories for a very long time.